

**CLAIMS**

1. A method operative in a work environment wherein entities to be scheduled each access a computer network using a client computer, comprising:

5        during a given time period, enabling each of a set of entities, irrespective of their seniority or ranking in the work environment, to identify a given schedule pattern set and to identify a set of one or more bids with respect to one or more schedules that are associated with that given  
10      schedule pattern set;

      at the close of the given time period, selecting a given set of the entities for scheduling with respect to the given schedule pattern set; and

15      assigning the given set of the entities to one or more of the candidate schedules that are associated with the given schedule pattern set;

      wherein one or more of the steps are performed at least in part using one or more processing devices.

20        2. The method as described in claim 1 further including the step of:

      enabling the given entity to identify a set of sorting preferences associated with the given schedule pattern set.

25        3. The method as described in claim 2 further including the step of enabling an entity to identify a new given schedule pattern set and an associated set of sorting preferences during the given time period.

30        4. The method as described in claim 1 further

including the step of enabling an entity to select a different schedule pattern set, and to identify a set of one or more bids associated with the different schedule pattern set during the given time period.

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5. The method as described in claim 1 wherein the entity ranks the set of one or more bids associated with the given schedule pattern set.

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6. The method as described in claim 1 further including the step of automatically ranking the set of one or more bids associated with the given schedule pattern set.

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7. The method as described in claim 1 further including the step of assigning a schedule to at least one entity that did not provide a bid for any candidate schedules that are associated with the given schedule pattern set.

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8. The method as described in claim 1 further including the step of deselecting a given set of the entities for scheduling with respect to the given schedule pattern set.

9. Apparatus, for use in a work environment wherein entities to be scheduled each access a computer network using a client computer, comprising:

- 5        a processor;
- code executable by the processor during a given time period to enable each of a set of entities, irrespective of their seniority or ranking in the work environment, to identify a given schedule pattern set and to identify a set
- 10      of one or more bids with respect to one or more schedules that are associated with that given schedule pattern set;
- code executable by the processor at the close of the given time period and responsive to selection of a given set of the entities for scheduling with respect to the
- 15      given schedule pattern set for assigning the given set of the entities to one or more of the candidate schedules that are associated with the given schedule pattern set.